

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS
of
POPULAR INFORMATION

No. 11

June 1938

ACER MACROPHYLLUM

BIG-LEAF MAPLE

Prepared-
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

ACER MACROPHYLLUM

BIG-LEAF MAPLE

Aceraceae

Maple Family.

A large rounded deciduous tree attaining 100 ft. in height, having a rough trunk often 2 to 4 ft. in diameter and branches smooth and reddish. Leaves large, 4 to 15 in. across, palmately parted into 5 broad, deeply-cleft divisions. Flowers pale yellow or cream, perfect and staminate, borne in racemes 4 to 8 or 10 in. long, appearing with the leaves. Fruits reddish while young, light brown and hairy when mature, the wings 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. Usually only 20 to 30% of the fruits contain fertile seeds.

Acer macrophyllum was described in 1814 by Pursh, an American botanist, from specimens collected on the Columbia River rapids by Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. There are over 100 species of Acer, many of which are well known in the eastern United States. In California there are four species, two of which are rarely more than shrubs.

The Big-Leaf Maple is a widespread tree of Western North America, attaining its greatest size and abundance near the coast from Northern California to British Columbia, although common in moist canyons in Southern California. The large rounded crowns of this tree are conspicuous features of the California landscape. It is not unusual to see trees nearly 100 ft. high and equally broad. In shady canyons the new leaves are often light green and the flowers very pale yellow. In sunny locations the new leaves are usually reddish-green and the flowers a somewhat darker yellow. Throughout the spring and summer these trees provide welcome shade. In the fall the fruits are often so abundant as to deeply cover the ground beneath the trees. In Southern California the leaves usually drop after merely turning yellow, while to the north they take on beautiful reddish, autumnal colorings for which Maples have always been famous.

The Big-Leaf Maple is the most valuable western hardwood and is lumbered extensively in the northern parts of its range. The wood is useful for cheaper grades of furniture and cabinet work, and for implements.

As a street or ornamental tree the Big-Leaf Maple is one of the finest western deciduous trees. Under cultivation it is a very fast growing tree. In our nursery rows we have obtained trees over 16 ft. high in two years from seed. One year old bare root seedlings are best for planting purposes. Seeds should be gathered in the fall and planted immediately in beds of sand. When the seedlings are 2 to 4 in. high they should be transplanted to nursery rows, where they should be kept well watered throughout the season. They may also be grown readily in outdoor propagating beds and not transplanted until they go dormant at the end of the first season. Seedlings attain heights of from 2 to 4 ft. at the end of the first growing season and should then be set out in their permanent locations. The Big-Leaf Maple requires plenty of moisture but is not particular as to soil or exposure.

We think that the Big-Leaf Maple has a number of fine features that make it valuable in California gardens. Throughout the spring and summer and most of the fall it provides welcome shade. During the winter months it obligingly sheds its leaves and lets the sunshine filter down through its branches. For this reason it is a splendid tree for planting around a patio or outdoor living room. During the late fall the leaves and fruits are shed over a period of about six weeks and must be raked up and carried away, but these are only minor faults and even evergreen trees shed leaves, some kinds almost daily throughout the entire year.

When only a few trees are desired it is probably better to purchase dormant bare root specimens from a nurseryman than to try to grow one's own, although the latter is not at all difficult. Planting of nursery stock should be done from January to March and the best results are obtained if the top is cut back severely.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

- o O o -

Purpose: A scientific institution devoted
to the growth and study of the native plants
of California for their botanical, horticult-
ural and popular features.

- o O o -

MAIL ADDRESS

R. F. D., Anaheim, California

- o O o -

Reissued without change of text, April, 1941